

Original Research Article

From "parallel" to "coupling": An analysis of the collaborative education mechanism between curriculum-based ideological and political education and dedicated ideological and political courses

Pan Zhang, Jingxia Liu

The Tourism College of Changchun University, Changchun, Jilin, 130000, China

Abstract: Curriculum-based and dedicated ideological-political courses are vital vehicles for university education, sharing the mission of fostering virtue through education. However, the "separation of two skins" persists, with both falling into dilemmas of "isolation" and "de-ideologization." From a "coupling" theory perspective, this paper analyzes the internal logic of shifting from "parallel" operation to "coupling." It explores collaborative mechanisms across four dimensions: goals, content, subjects, and institutions. Finally, it proposes pathways based on conceptual consensus, teacher collaboration, platform support, and evaluation-driven improvement, offering insights for constructing a "Greater Ideological and Political Education" pattern.

Keywords: curriculum-based ideological and political education; dedicated ideological and political courses; collaborative education; coupling mechanism

1. Why "parallel"? The realistic dilemmas in the collaboration between curriculum-based ideological and political education and dedicated ideological and political courses

1.1. Conceptual dilemma: The consciousness of collaborative education needs deepening

In the traditional education system, a clear divide exists between professional education and ideological and political education, with the "two skins" phenomenon being a prominent manifestation of resulting educational challenges. Some university teachers hold vague understandings of the relationship between these two forms, exhibiting two misconceptions: first, simplistically viewing curriculum-based ideological and political education as a "professional extension of dedicated ideological and political courses," believing it merely involves adding ideological and political content to professional courses; second, treating them as entirely separate educational channels, lacking a sense of collaboration. Questionnaire surveys indicate that the need to upgrade and update the concept of collaborative education is a prominent current challenge.

1.2. Subject dilemma: Weak synergy among teachers

The synergy between these two forms hinges critically on teacher collaboration. However, in reality, there is a lack of effective communication mechanisms between teachers of dedicated ideological and political courses and those of professional courses. Teachers of dedicated courses often have limited understanding of the knowledge systems and industry demands within specialized fields, hindering their ability to deeply integrate ideological and political theory with professional practice. Conversely, professional course teachers have limited capacity to identify and integrate ideological and political elements, requiring enhancement of their educational capabilities. The weak synergy among the main subjects of collaborative education often results in the construction of curriculum-based ideological and political education remaining superficial, failing to achieve the organic unity of value guidance and professional education.

1.3. Content dilemma: Incoherent integration of ideological and political elements

Curriculum-based ideological and political education requires the organic integration of ideological and political elements into professional courses. However, this integration should not be a simple addition or rigid grafting, but a natural "embedding." In practice, some professional courses suffer from the labeling and fragmentation of ideological and political elements, lacking inherent connections between ideological content and professional knowledge, thus failing to achieve a subtle and effective educational impact. Simultaneously, there is a lack of overarching planning for the educational content between dedicated ideological and political

courses and professional courses, leading either to content repetition or mutual disconnection, resulting in insufficient content coordination for collaborative education.

1.4. Mechanism dilemma: Insufficient institutional guarantees for collaborative education

Sustained progress in collaborative education requires robust institutional mechanisms as guarantees. Currently, some universities lack long-term mechanisms for the collaboration between these two forms at the top-level design stage. Imbalances in collaborative education are evident: a lack of cross-departmental collaboration mechanisms in teaching management, an absence of educational outcome assessment indicators in teacher evaluations, and resource allocation that prioritizes dedicated ideological and political courses over curriculum-based ones. These institutional obstacles constrain the in-depth development of collaborative education.

2. Towards "coupling": Mechanism analysis of the collaboration between curriculum-based ideological and political education and dedicated ideological and political courses

2.1. Shared goals: The fundamental principle of fostering virtue through education

The coupling of these two forms is first reflected in the shared direction of their educational goals. Dedicated ideological and political courses guide students to establish correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and value systems through systematic theoretical education. Curriculum-based ideological and political education, on the other hand, achieves the unity of knowledge transmission and value guidance by exploring the value connotations embedded in professional courses. Their tasks are similar and goals aligned, consistently anchored in addressing "what kind of people to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom," ensuring service to the fundamental objective of cultivating builders and successors for socialism. This consistency in goals provides the fundamental principle for their shift from "parallel" operation to "coupling."

2.2. Embedded content: Organic integration of ideological and political elements

The content of dedicated ideological and political courses and curriculum-based ideological and political education is complementary. Dedicated courses provide the systematic theoretical framework and value guidance, while curriculum-based education integrates this theory into professional practice, giving abstract values concrete professional carriers. Curriculum-based ideological and political education represents the vivid practice of Marxist theory in the new era. By naturally and vividly integrating the implicit ideological and political elements of a course throughout the entire educational process, it opens a new educational pathway characterized by a silent and subtle influence, achieving the mutual permeation of knowledge education and values education. This content embedding is not a simple "ideology + profession" but an endogenous exploration of ideological and political elements based on professional characteristics.

2.3. Collaborative subjects: Constructing a teacher community

The coupling of these two forms requires the support of a teacher community. Moving from "parallel" operation to "coupling" implies a shift from teachers of dedicated ideological and political courses and professional courses working independently to engaging in collaborative education. Building collaborative teams comprising both types of teachers and exploring mechanisms for joint lesson preparation and co-teaching can facilitate mutual complementarity of strengths. Teachers of dedicated courses provide theoretical guidance and suggestions for identifying ideological and political elements to professional course teachers, who in turn offer professional cases and practical materials, thereby enhancing each other's educational capabilities through two-way interaction.

2.4. Linked mechanisms: Systematic design of institutional guarantees

Sustained deepening of collaborative education requires systematic institutional design. The coupling of these two forms necessitates the formation of linked mechanisms in curriculum development, teaching management, teacher development, evaluation, and assessment. Strengthening the top-level design of dedicated ideological and political courses and enhancing synergy among different such courses addresses the lack of inter-course coordination. Simultaneously, integrating curriculum-based ideological and political education into the planning of professional course development allows for the organic integration of ideological and political education with professional education at the curriculum level. Mechanism linkage transforms collaborative education from an occasional occurrence to a normalized practice, from spontaneous action to conscious endeavor.

3. How to achieve "coupling"? practical pathways for the collaboration between curriculum-based ideological and political education and dedicated ideological and political courses

3.1. Consolidate conceptual consensus to build the ideological foundation for collaborative education

Concept guides action. Promoting the shift from "parallel" operation to "coupling" first requires consolidating consensus on the educational philosophy. Through methods such as specialized training, interdisciplinary teaching-research activities, and experience sharing, teachers' cognitive biases can be eliminated, fostering conceptual integration between teachers of dedicated ideological and political courses and professional course teachers. Organizing activities focused on teacher ethics and conduct helps build consensus that education is a shared responsibility, enabling every teacher to recognize that both dedicated ideological and political courses and professional courses bear the common mission of fostering virtue through education. Teachers' high level of identification with the collaborative education between these two forms is the intrinsic driving force for achieving the goal of fostering virtue through education.

3.2. Strengthen teacher collaboration to build an educational community

Building collaborative teams of ideological-political course teachers and professional faculty is key to deepening cooperative education. Universities should establish interdisciplinary mechanisms for joint lesson preparation and mutual observations to enhance capabilities through exchange. A collaborative training mechanism should integrate political education competence into professional teacher development and professional knowledge into political course teacher learning. Special funds should encourage theoretical research and practical exploration. Finally, form diverse teams—including teachers, industry experts, and model workers—to explore effective methods focused on fostering virtue.

3.3. Build integrated platforms to expand the space for collaborative education

Platform construction is important for collaborative education. On one hand, leverage information technology to build digital collaboration platforms. Establish a data middle platform, integrating data from multiple departments to create a full-cycle database covering curriculum, teacher, and student development. Use virtual simulation to recreate historical scenes and professional contexts, providing immersive learning experiences. On the other hand, integrate practical resources to build education platforms. Integrate ideological and political education into professional practice, relying on practice bases, red education bases, and social service platforms to carry out ideology+profession activities. Through school-enterprise cooperation and social services, build practical education communities, continuously forging a great classroom for practical education.

3.4. Improve evaluation mechanisms to drive continuous improvement in collaborative education

The evaluation mechanism acts as the baton for collaborative education. Construct a multi-evaluation system encompassing student evaluations, peer reviews, and expert supervision, incorporating curriculum-based political education into teaching quality indicators. At the student level, build a three-dimensional system covering process, outcome, and development to assess growth in knowledge, abilities, and affective domains. At the teacher level, construct a four-dimensional model involving teachers, universities, colleges, and students, integrating collaborative education effectiveness into performance assessments and title evaluations. Leveraging blockchain's immutability, use smart contracts to automatically record teacher participation, forming a closed-loop mechanism of evaluation, feedback, and improvement.

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About the author

Pan Zhang(1989.10-), Female, The Tourism College of Changchun University, Assistant Research Fellow.
Jingxia Liu(1984.11-), Female, The Tourism College of Changchun University, Teaching Assistant.

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